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COMMON CARRIER ACTION

JOINT BOARD STAFF RELEASES COMPREHENSIVE MONITORING REPORT ON UNIVERSAL SERVICE

Washington, D.C. -- The staff of the Federal-State Joint Board on universal service has released its most recent Monitoring Report on Universal Service. This report reflects information on the telephone industry filed with the FCC through December 1999.

The Report released today presents current data in each of the eleven subject categories selected for monitoring: 1) industry revenues and contributions; 2) low income support; 3) high cost support; 4) schools and libraries support; 5) rural health care support; 6) subscribership and penetration; 7) rates and price indexes; 8) network usage and growth; 9) quality of service; 10) infrastructure; and 11) revenues, expenses and investment.

A monitoring program was established in the mid-1980's, at the recommendation of the separations Joint Board, to track trends related to universal service and related matters. Since then the Joint Board staff has prepared Monitoring Reports at least once a year--a compendium of hundreds of pages of statistical data on subscribership and penetration, loop costs, separations factors, universal service fund payments, etc. In 1998 the publication of this report was changed from the separations Joint Board staff to the universal service Joint Board staff, and the frequency was increased to twice a year. This is the third Monitoring Report from the universal service Joint Board staff.

The Monitoring Report is unique in that it is the only document that includes information on every local telephone company in the nation. The FCC has not imposed any new reporting burdens on any company to generate the information. Instead it uses data which the National Exchange Carrier Association collects for its own needs, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and other organizations, and publicly available ARMIS submissions. Another characteristic of the monitoring reports is that they are staff reports. They are not intended to be policy documents and contain only enough text to describe the tables. A copy of the Report is available for inspection in the FCC's Reference Information Center, Courtyard Level, 445 12th Street, SW. The Report can be downloaded by section from the **FCC-State Link** internet site, which can be reached at http://www.fcc.gov/ccb/stats on the World Wide Web. Names for print image files: mrd99-0.pdf, mrd99-1.pdf, ..., mrd99-11.pdf for the introduction and each section separately. Names for condensed files in word processor (Word 97) and spreadsheet (Lotus 123 .wk4 or Excel 97) formats: mrd99-0.zip, mrd99-1.zip, ..., mrd99-11.zip.

Copies of the Report are available for purchase from the Commission's duplicating contractor, International Transcription Service, Inc. (ITS) at (202) 857-3800.

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CC Docket No. 98-202

MONITORING REPORT

CC DOCKET NO. 98-202

DECEMBER 1999

Prepared by Federal and State Staff for the

Federal-State Joint Board in

CC Docket No. 96-45

This report is available for reference in the FCC's Reference Information Center, Courtyard Level, 445 12th Street SW, Washington, DC 20554. Call International Transcription Services, Inc. at (202) 857-3800 to purchase a copy. The report can also be downloaded from the **FCC-State Link** internet site at http://www.fcc.gov/ccb/stats on the World Wide Web. Names for print image files: mrd99-0.pdf, mrd99-1.pdf, ... , mrd99-11.pdf for the introduction and each section separately. Names for compressed files in word processor (Word 97) and spreadsheet (Excel 97 or Lotus 123 .wk4) formats: mrd99-0.zip, mrd99-1.zip, ... , mrd99-11.zip.

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Monitoring Report CC Docket No. 98-202 December 1999

Introduction and Summary

This is the third report in a series of reports prepared by federal and state staff members for the Federal-State Joint Board in CC Docket No. 96-45 (Universal Service Joint Board). These reports contain information to monitor the impact of universal service support mechanisms, and the methods used to finance them. These mechanisms were adopted by the Federal Communications Commission (Commission), based on recommendations from the Universal Service Joint Board. These reports are part of a monitoring program created by the Commission in 1997¹ to replace the similar program in CC Docket No. 87-339 that resulted in a series of nineteen Monitoring Reports. The current program incorporates most of the information that was collected under the previous program, and also new materials from the reports of the administrator of the universal service support mechanisms, the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC). To enhance our monitoring ability, we have created an open docket², which allows data, materials, comments, and studies to be submitted at any time.

The monitoring program has proven to be valuable, not only as a report on the effects of regulatory changes, but also as a complete census of all incumbent local exchange carriers. Because smaller carriers generally are exempt from most Commission reporting requirements, the Monitoring Report incorporates data from several sources, including the National Exchange Carrier Association (NECA) and USAC. NECA, at the direction of the Commission, collects information in order to administer the access charge pools and to provide information to USAC to help administer the Universal Service Fund. USAC also collects information from all eligible carriers to administer the universal service support mechanisms. The Monitoring Report, therefore, contains the only available comprehensive data on all incumbent local exchange carriers, containing data on such matters as the number of telephone lines, calling volumes, and certain types of costs.

This report presents data for the eleven subject categories selected for monitoring. The first section is about the contributions to the universal service support mechanisms and industry revenues, on which those contributions are now based. The next four sections are about the various support mechanisms: low income support; high cost support; schools and libraries support; and rural health care support. The remaining six sections provide information on matters that might be affected by the support mechanisms: subscribership and penetration; rates and price indices; network usage and growth; quality of service; infrastructure; and revenues, expenses and investment.

¹ *Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service*, CC Docket No. 96-45, *Report and Order*, FCC 97-157, para. 869 (released May 8, 1997).

² CC Docket No. 98-202.

Because the Monitoring Report is published twice a year and some of the information published is filed only once a year, not all tables are published in every issue. We recommend that users keep the two latest issues to be certain they have all the latest information. In this report we only include tables for which we have new information, except for a few summary tables. The following are highlights of some of the material in this report. Section 1 provides an update on contributions to the universal service support mechanisms, and the industry revenues on which they are based. Section 2 includes 1999 data on the Lifeline and Link-Up America programs. Section 3 includes data from the October 1, 1999, NECA universal service fund filing, a summary of four years of revised historical data, and a table showing study area changes in the last four years. In addition, it includes projected payments through the first quarter of 2000 for all of the high cost support programs, based on the quarterly reports from USAC. Section 4 includes updated data on the schools and libraries support. Section 5 includes updated data on the rural health care support. Section 6 includes Census data on subscribership through November 1999. It also includes the results of some research on the effectiveness of some programs designed to increase subscribership. Section 7 includes updated Consumer Price Index and Producer Price Index data and other updated rate information. Section 8 includes 1999 NECA access minute data. Section 9 includes updated 1998 data on the quality of service from the Commission's Automated Reporting Management Information System (ARMIS) reports. Section 10 includes updated data through 1998 on infrastructure from the ARMIS reports. Section 11 includes information on revenues, expenses and investment for 1998 from the ARMIS reports.

This report is based on information available to us as of December 31, 1999. This entire report is available electronically through the **FCC-State Link** internet site, which can be reached at http://www.fcc.gov/ccb/stats on the World Wide Web. It is available in both page image (.pdf) format and in a compressed (.zip) format, which, when unzipped yields word processing and spreadsheet files. In addition, information received well in advance of the next Monitoring Report will be made available on an interim basis in separate staff reports or in raw data files (such as most NECA filings used in the Monitoring Report) on the internet site. In addition, the ARMIS data are available on the ARMIS internet site, which can be reached at http://www.fcc.gov/ccb/armis/db/.

For ease of public reference, we ask that parties submitting materials for this docket provide a duplicate copy to the FCC's Reference Information Center,³ where copies of all materials filed in the docket are available for public reference.

³ Courtyard Level, 445 12th Street SW, Washington, DC 20554.

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